

## **WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report**

### **January 2006**

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Division News
  - Office of Transit Mobility
  - Public Transportation
  - Sound Transit Program
  - Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
  - Passenger Rail
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Announcements
  - Upcoming Events
- 

#### **Division News**

##### **CTR Task Force publishes 2005 legislative report**

In late December, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force published its 2005 report to the legislature. The report contains the Task Force's assessment of the program and its recommendations for efficiency improvement, which the legislature will consider during its 2006 session.

The Task Force finds that the CTR program is successful and should be continued. In 2005 fewer commuters drove alone to work sites participating in CTR, reducing nearly 20,000 vehicle trips each morning statewide. The seven percent reduction in drive-alone trips at CTR work sites from 1993 to 2005 creates substantial benefits for the transportation system, particularly at major bottlenecks and chokepoints on state highways. In the central Puget Sound, the absence of 14,200 vehicle trips reduced delay by an estimated 11.6 percent during the peak travel period on average mornings in 2005.

CTR commuters reduced petroleum consumption in Washington by nearly 6 million gallons in 2005 (saving \$13.7 million through the choices they made in the program), and reduced emissions of regulated air pollutants and greenhouse gases.

The Task Force is proposing changes that would:

- focus the program on the urban growth areas in the most congested areas of the state;
- increase planning coordination among local jurisdictions, regional organizations, and the state; and
- increase local flexibility in implementing the program.

The Task Force's most substantive recommendation is to create a voluntary Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center Program, which would provide state incentives and technical assistance to local jurisdictions to develop CTR programs in key employment centers.

For more information about the CTR Task Force report, visit

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/taskforce/tfmaterials.cfm#program>

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## Office of Transit Mobility

### Report to the legislature on the Regional Mobility Grant Program

In December staff in the Office of Transit Mobility completed a report to the legislature on the Regional Mobility Grant program. The report, delivered December 27, outlines the process used to develop grant criteria and evaluate the 43 projects seeking more than \$51.5 million in grant funds. This was more than double the \$20 million in grant funds available for this cycle. The report includes a fiscally constrained list of 14 recommended projects with an analysis of their benefits to the transportation system. The legislature will make the final decision on awarding of grant funds during the 2006 session.

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## Public Transportation

### Willamette University offers Transit Management Certificate Program in Seattle

Willamette University will present two 1-week training sessions in Seattle this spring for public transportation, paratransit, and community transportation management professionals. The training is part of the Transit and Community Transportation Management Certificate Program offered through the Willamette University's Atkinson Graduate School of Management. The following topics will be presented by a dynamic group of professionals and instructors in the public transportation field:

**April 3–7, 2006:** Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness / Public Transportation—Issues and Challenges / Managing the Policy Environment—Regulations, Funding, and Local Policy / Budgeting and Financial Management / Managing the Operation Effectively

**May 15–19, 2006:** Service Quality Management / Marketing and Customer Service / Human Resource Management / Managing Your Maintenance / Risk Management, Safety, and Security

WSDOT's Public Transportation and Commute Options Office is hosting the Seattle courses together with the Community Transportation Association of the Northwest, public transit systems, and Willamette University. Mark your calendars and look for more information in future newsletters. If you are a manager of a rural or community public transportation agency and are interested in a scholarship, contact Cathy Silins at (360) 705-7919 or [silinsc@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:silinsc@wsdot.wa.gov) for information about scholarship availability.

### "County Connector" bus service off to a great start



Commuters took over 25,000 bus rides on the new "County Connector" bus service during its first three months of service. On September 6, three transit agencies—Island Transit, Skagit

Transit, and Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)—combined efforts to provide service between the three counties.

WTA provides an average of 227 rides on weekdays and 63 rides on Saturdays. WTA General Manager Richard Walsh said, "We're extremely pleased with the ridership on the County Connector. This alternative—used by hundreds of commuters who travel up and down I-5 everyday—allows for a reduction in fuel consumption and vehicle miles traveled."

The service gives northern sound residents direct transit access to the Skagit Multimodal Station in Mount Vernon, the central connecting point for riders. Travelers in the tri-county region can access bus, rail, ferry, and airport shuttle services at regional transfer stations from south of the Seattle metropolitan area to the Canadian border.

The County Connector is a pilot program made possible by a 2-year, \$2 million grant from WSDOT with funds appropriated by the 2005 Washington State Legislature. WSDOT supports the development of connections between all modes with its Intercity Bus Program and Regional Mobility Grant Program. For route and schedule information, visit [County Connector](#).

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## Sound Transit Program

### Dylan Counts joins Sound Transit Program team



As WSDOT's new Urban Rail Liaison Engineer, Dylan Counts coordinates design and technical issues between the Sound Transit Link Light Rail Program and WSDOT offices in the Northwest Region, Urban Corridors Office, and headquarters. He is responsible for compiling all WSDOT reviews and comments, and coordinating actions between the two agencies to resolve issues and concerns.

Dylan also works closely with the WSDOT Rail Office staff on common issues to Sound Transit's Sounder commuter rail program and the WSDOT-supported Amtrak *Cascades* trains. He also develops technical reports and briefing papers on the

status of various rail transit issues. Dylan brings 23 years of experience at WSDOT to his new position, including work on the I-90 floating bridge; design of Bellevue transit access; serving as a chief inspector for civil and structural engineering; construction liaison for city, county, and local businesses; and leading design teams on several projects.

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## Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

### ACCT members attend Governor's Conference

Governor Christine Gregoire recently hosted conferences for all gubernatorial appointees serving on state boards and commissions. On December 15, four members of the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) attended a conference in Olympia followed by a reception at the Governor's Mansion:

- Marilyn Mason Plunkett, Community Transportation Association of the Northwest
- Mike Harbour, Washington State Transit Association
- Theresa Hekel, Washington Pupil Transportation Association
- Bernice Robinson, Consumer Representative

The Governor explained her priorities and provided training to enhance commissioners' effectiveness in their service. Presentations included the role of boards and commissions in state government; serving as an effective executive commissioner; ethics training; Governor Gregoire's goals, messages, and legislative agenda; and outreach and community events.



Bernice Robinson, meets the Governor and First Gentleman at the Governor's mansion.

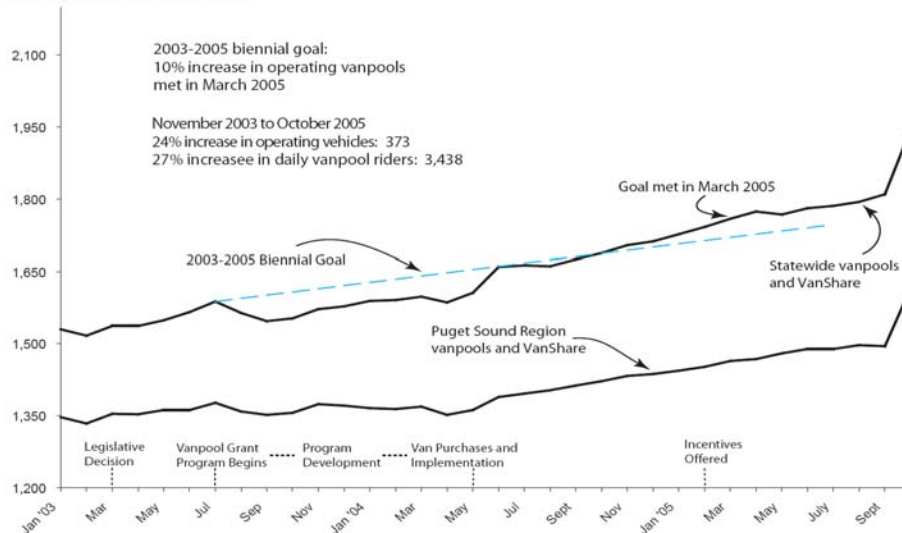
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## Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management

### Vanpool numbers continue to climb

Vanpool statistics through October 2005 show historic highs in vanpool occupancy, number of vans in operation, number of *VanShare* vehicles in operation, and number of passenger trips. Between November 2003 and October 2005 the number of vanpools on the road in Washington State increased by 23 percent from 1,572 to 1,938 vehicles. During the same period vanpool riders statewide increased by 27 percent from 12,852 daily riders to 16,314 daily riders. The chart below shows the dramatic growth in statewide vanpools since the vanpool grant program began and particularly in October 2005 when rising fuel prices increased commuter interest in vanpooling.

Public vanpools operating in Washington  
January 2003 to October 2005



*The Vanpool Investment Program met its vanpool growth goal for the 2003-2005 biennium in March 2005. Between November 2003 and October 2005 the number of vanpools on the road has increased by 23 percent and the number of riders has increased by 27 percent. Source: WSDOT Vanpool Database.*

### Innovative GIS analysis supports the CTR Task Force's legislative report

As the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force developed its 2005 report to the legislature, the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) tools helped to improve the technical analysis of CTR data and, as a result, the Task Force's decision-making and communications. While GIS has long been used at WSDOT for a variety of project and planning purposes, this year the agency's Public Transportation and Commute Options Office increased its use of GIS to analyze data from the CTR surveys and other sources.

GIS analysis helped make the evaluation of the more than 250,000 CTR survey records more efficient and effective. For example, a tool known as geocoding helped "place" existing CTR work sites on a map so that WSDOT and the Task Force could evaluate the performance of work sites based on their location inside and outside urban growth areas and designated centers. WSDOT staff also used geocoding to evaluate the location of CTR and non-CTR work sites that received the Rideshare Tax Credit.

WSDOT staff developed new GIS tools to more easily assure CTR data quality. In one case, a new application assisted with checking ZIP code errors on surveys to find unknown work site satellite facilities, typos, and other inaccuracies. This made it possible for the CTR data to be used by the Puget Sound Regional Council to calculate the impacts of the CTR program on traffic delay in the central Puget Sound.

As the legislature considers CTR program changes and the Task Force develops new program guidelines, GIS will continue to be an important tool for analyzing program data and communicating the program's impacts. For more information about the use of GIS to analyze CTR data, contact Lise Goss at (360) 705-7906 or [gosse@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:gosse@wsdot.wa.gov)

### **Projects recommended for TRPP funding**

This month, the Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) selection committee recommended projects for a total of \$1.5 million in funding for the 2005–2007 biennium. These projects will reduce approximately 4,621 trips per year at an average cost of \$325 per trip. WSDOT is reviewing the applications and the selected projects will be announced by Friday, January 13.

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## **Announcements**

### **C-TRAN unveils solar-powered lights at bus stops**

C-TRAN is installing solar-powered lights at selected bus stops in Clark County. The “i-STOP” illuminates an area for passengers waiting in the dark and uses a flashing light to signal approaching buses. With funding provided by a federal grant, C-TRAN purchased 90 i-STOPS, 50 of which are equipped with only the flashing light. A total of 31 units will be installed along Route 4, which is part of C-TRAN's participation in the Fourth Plain Traffic Safety Project. Sixteen more will be installed along Route 32 on Evergreen Boulevard and Andresen Road. The remaining solar-powered lights will be installed on an as-needed basis.

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## **Upcoming Events**

### **Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force meeting**

January 27, Friday  
Tukwila Community Center, Tukwila  
11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. For more information, contact  
Shelley Pedro at [pedros@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:pedros@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7846.

### **Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) meeting**

February 3, Friday  
9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.  
During the February meeting the council will address Coordinated Human Service and Transportation Planning, with input from representatives of MPOs and RTPOs. To confirm times and locations for meetings, visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. For questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, Communications Manager, at [buellt@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:buellt@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7439. To read past issues or to subscribe to the newsletter, please visit [http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/ptr\\_newsletter/default.cfm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/ptr_newsletter/default.cfm).